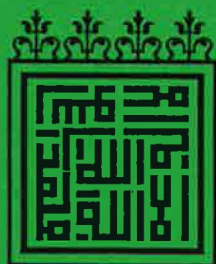


The Recital
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Spiritual Practice

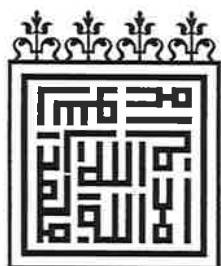


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The Recital
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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

The Recital of Qur^ʿān as a Spiritual Practice

In the Name of Allāh, The Mercy Full, the Bestower of Mercy. Praise be to Allāh ﷻ as befits the greatness of His Glory and Majesty. May the Blessings and Peace of Allāh be upon our master Muḥammad, and his family and loyal companions.

I testify that there is no deity save Allāh ﷻ alone without partner. He imparts knowledge direct from the Divine Presence to whom He chooses among His slaves. I testify that Muḥammad ﷺ is His worshipful slave, His messenger and the Seal of the Prophets ﷺ.

Whoever imitates him has risen through resplendent elevations, may Allāh bless him and grant him peace and his family, who did without in this abode and who acted with love for the essence of Allah ﷻ alone.

The first command of Allāh ﷻ when He wished to revive ʿIslām some 1400 years ago was,

﴿ اِقْرَأْ ﴾

ʿIqāraʾ

“Recite!”

{ al-ʿAlaqā 96:1 }

This command, which is the beginning in time of the Last Testament, al-Qur^ʿānu-l-Furqān, was repeated three times to the Prophet ﷺ, who protested his inability to read until the point when the Angel ﷻ embraced him and pressed him to his bosom and taught him to read from mouth to ear — heart to heart.

When later his beloved wife Khadijah رضي الله عنها, asked him how he managed to read when he had always been unlettered, he replied, “It was as though the words were written in light upon my heart.”

The full text of that original transmission reads,

﴿ اِقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ . خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ .
 اِقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ . الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ .
 عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ . ﴾

‘iqāra’ bi-s-mi-rabbika-l-ladhī khālaqa •
 khālaqa-l-‘insāna min ‘alaqa •
 ‘iqāra’ wa rabbuka-l-akram •
 alladhī ‘allama bi-l-qalam •
 ‘allama-l-‘insāna mā lam ya‘lam •

“Recite!

In the Name of your Lord who created.
 Created the human from a clot.

Read! And your Lord is Most Generous.

Who taught by the pen — taught what man knew not.”

{ al-‘Alaqa 96:1-5 }



Thus the revivification in our time and in each time, for all beings and in our own being, of the eternal and recurrent message of ‘Islām attested to through out time by all the Prophets and Messengers ﷺ sent from Allāh ﷻ, is initially set in motion by the act of recitation and all that flows from that act.

All Ṣūfī Orders trace their line of spiritual transmission back to the Grand Ṣhaykh of all the Ṣhuyūkh, Muḥammad, the Messenger of Allāh, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him and his family.

The Recital of Qur'ān as a Spiritual Practice

If one, as a sincere student {*murīd*}, seeks to emulate {*taṣawwur*} the Shaykh ﷺ in his various doings, even more so, since Muḥammad the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ is the Shaykh of all the Shuyukh, does the murīd seek to follow the Practice {*sunnah*} of the Prophet ﷺ.

Thus it well known that the Practice {*sunnah*} of the Prophet ﷺ is a sure way to felicity in this world and the last. This being so, generations of Muslims have from the beginning made it their own practice, as it was his ﷺ practice {*sunnah*}, to spend time every day in the sonorous 'recitation' {*tartīl*} of the Qur'ān.

This is of course aside from the ṣalāh¹ itself, in which the recital of Qur'ān makes both its aural and silent demands in the daily life and practice of the Ṣūfī who is the Muslim *par excellence*.

There are certain outer {*dhāhiri*} and inner {*bātani*} dimensions to be understood in regards to the general subject of the recital {*tilawāh*} of Qur'ān.

But in both the outer and the inner dimensions there must be a strong and abiding desire {*himmah*} to fulfill the commands of Allāh ﷻ.

When the seeker grasps the necessity of learning to 'read', this must be followed by the placing oneself under the guidance of one who teaches 'how' to read.

This holds true for both the °Arab and the non-°Arab {*a°jam*}, for the 'reading' that is required is not an unconscious {*ghaflah*} reading in which words are merely mouthed but rather what is required is a much deeper and more profound way of reading.

¹ the act of worship and devotion incumbent five times daily on all the God centered self surrendered people {Muslims}

One's teacher in Qur'ān, as my own teacher Shāykh Maḥmūd al-^cAzāzī ؒ of Alexandria made clear, is, in essence, the conduit through which the teaching flows.

This is because one's teacher has learned it from the lips of his teacher and he from his teacher until, as with all the spiritual teachings within 'Islām, it traces back to the Prophet ﷺ who learned it from the Angel Jibrīl ؑ {Gabriel}.

One might easily say that one's teacher is outwardly the Jibrīl ؑ of one's being, because the teaching is not so much a written teaching as it is an oral teaching, the writing being only an indication, as it were, in the sense that musical notation is not the song.

Just as we put ourselves in the hands of our Shāykh ؒ, so we must sincerely put ourselves in the hands of our teacher, in accord with the Words of Allāh:

﴿ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يُبَايِعُوْنَكَ اَنَّمَا يُبَايِعُوْنَ اِلٰهَ
يَدُ اللّٰهِ فَوْقَ اَيْدِيْهِمْ ﴾

°inna-l-ladhīna yubāyi^cūnka °innamā yubāyi^cūna-llāh
: yadu-llāhi fawqa °aydīhim :

Truly those who give you the bay^cah
give their bay^cah to Allāh.

The Hand of Allāh is over their hands.”
{al-Fath 48:10}

The teaching itself is resonant sound {ṣawt} and how the sound is formed and where it originates from, how it appears, momentarily, and where it goes.

At another level it is meaning but first it is sound.

One must listen if one is to learn.

The Recital of Qurʾān as a Spiritual Practice

Not only must one listen but one must listen with the utmost care and then try to reproduce exactly the sound that one hears, that one remembers {dhakara}, out of one's own heart and lungs, by the means of one's own throat, mouth, tongue and lips.

One must be prepared to spend many years in this learning process and to accept from the very beginning that one will never really ever truly be able to reproduce more than an approximation of the sound that one actually heard.

In this manner the recital of the Qurʾān may be likened to the ṣalāh — perfect moments of which one may experience — but the abiding continuity of which remains elusive save for the great ʿawliyāʾ ﷺ.

It is, in brief, another one of the Ways, like the Ṣalāh, the Ṣawm {Fasting}, the Zakāh {Purification of one's wealth thru personal giving} and the Ḥajj {Pilgrimage}, that Allāh has so generously provided us as means by which we may bring about our perfection.

Again, as in all the rest of the Ways given by Allāh ﷻ, it is something perfectly clear and straightforward as well as infinitely deep and subtle.

One needs the desire {*himmah*}, the teacher {*ash-shaykh*}, and the written book {*al-miṣḥaf*}.

Without sufficiently strong desire to learn one will soon abandon the practice. Without the shaykh it is difficult to know how to practice correctly, even tho there are various useful electronic {tapes, programs} and print aids available. The shaykh is both correct and he corrects and his *correction* is essential.

Alḥamdulillāh in the present time it is easy to come by the written book {*muṣḥaf*}. Little more than a century ago there were no mass printed copies of the *muṣḥaf* and many students, in addition to learning to 'read' with their teacher, also learned to write and by writing produced their own copy of the Qur'ān corrected on each page by the *ṣaykh*.

This was in itself a great teaching and one which continues to be practiced though, sadly, it is not so wide spread a practice in this age.

One also needs time and space.

Most seekers solve the time part of the equation by devoting the time after the dawn {*fajr*} ṣalāh and just before the rising of the sun {*shurūk*} to both Remembrance {*dhikr*} and Recital {*tartīl*}.

It is also customary to practice *dhikr* and *tilāwah* before retiring² for the first part of the night.

One needs only the space of one's prayer mat and the usual prerequisites of cleanliness.³, of body and place.

If possible one should find a way to practice with one's teacher at least once a week and every other day if possible at whatever time it can be arranged.

Above all one must be consistent and persistent in the practice and, when setting parameters, strive faithfully to carry out the program set by the teacher within the real limits {*hudūd*} that exist.

² The first part of the night prior to waking for the voluntary mid-night {2:am - 4:am} devotions and practices.

³ Here of course we refer to both one's own ritual cleanliness as well as the cleanliness of the surroundings. If not known these can be acquired from any book dealing with *fiqh* {religious understanding}.

The Recital of Qurʾān as a Spiritual Practice

Some idea of the exalted position with Allāh ﷻ that the teacher of Qurʾān enjoys may be deduced from the following ḥadīth, in which the Prophet ﷺ said,

“The best among you is the one who learns Qurʾān and teaches it.”⁴

In some versions of this ḥadīth an *alif* is found before the *waw* thus giving the meaning,

“The best among you is the one who learns Qurʾān or teaches it.”

The latter meaning, though not to be found in all collections, is more generous in that both the learner and the teacher are equally blessed.

Shaykh Sahl at-Tustarī {d 283H} رحمته الله, an early ṣūfī and distinguished commentator {*muffasir*} of the Qurʾān said, “The proof for the love for Allāh is the existence of love for the Word of Allāh in one’s heart.”

The Prophet ﷺ said the Lord said, “If anyone finds no time for My remembrance {*dhikrī*} and for asking {*masʾalati*} my favours because of their absorption in reading Qurʾān, then I shall give him more than all those who ask favours of me.”⁵

As for blessings we must remember that, “Whoever reads one letter of the Book is credited with one blessing {*hasanah*} and one blessing is equal to tenfold in its rewards,”⁶ in accord with the promise of Allāh, “Whoever brings a good deed will receive tenfold the like thereof.” {al-ʿAnʿām 6:161}

⁴Narrated by Uthmān رحمته الله recorded in al-Bukhārī, Abū Dawūd, Tirmidhī

⁵Narrated by Abū Saʿid رحمته الله recorded in at-Tirmidhī

⁶Narrated by Ibn Masʿūd رحمته الله recorded in at-Tirmidhī

And were that not enough, Allāh ﷻ says,

﴿ وَٱللَّهُ يُضَعِفُ لِمَن يَشَآءُ ﴾

wa-llāhu yuḍāʿifu limañy-yashhāʾ

“And Allāh multiplies {the rewards} as He wills.”
{al-Baqarah 2:261}

Taking cognizance of this in our mind and heart what can be our response other than to hasten to such a rich and fertile field of endeavor?

The Shūyukḥ have given some guidelines, both outer and inner, that should be taken into consideration.

In the outer realms one must remember to:

- 1) Perform the wudū⁷ and then sit facing the qiblah⁸ in a calm and dignified manner.
- 2) Read with a steady measure {*tartīl*} and correct pronunciation {*tajwīd*}.
- 3) When reading the Signs {*ʿāyāt*} of mercy and punishment one should weep if possible.
- 4) If you suspect yourself of insincerity or think that your reading will disturb others you should lower your voice. Otherwise one should read in a clear and melodious voice.

From a more internal perspective it is important that:

- 1) The heart, along with the body, should be washed and purified of all distractions and doubts.

⁷ The lustrations necessary for restoring one to a state of ritual purity.

⁸ The direction of Makkah al-Mukaramah where the first house of prayer, established by Adam ؑ, raised again by ʾIbrahim ؑ and purified by Muḥammad ﷺ is located.

The Recital of Qur'ān as a Spiritual Practice

- 2) The heart should be full of the glory of the Qur'ān with realization of its sublimity.
- 3) One should reflect in the heart the loftiness, majesty and magnificence of Allāh ﷻ Who alone is the source of the Revelation.
- 4) Submit the heart to the meaning of the Signs. In the case of the Signs which deal with Divine Punishment the heart should tremble with awe and in the case of the Signs which deal with the Mercy of Allāh ﷻ the heart should be filled with joy and delight.
- 5) If certain Signs catch the attention one should stop and contemplate them deeply. It is reported that the Prophet ﷺ once spent a whole night reading a single 'āyat over and over again.

﴿إِنْ تُعَذِّبُهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ عِبَادُكَ
وَإِنْ تَغْفِرْلَهُمْ فَإِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ﴾

ʿin tu^cadhdhbbhum fa^ʿinnahum ʿibāduk ;

wa ʿin taghfirlahum fa^ʿinnaka ʿanta-l-ʿazīzu-l-ḥakīm

“If You should punish them — they are Your servants
— and if You should forgive them —
so truly You are the Mighty, the Wise.”

{al-Māʾidah 5:118}

- 6) The ears should be made to listen as though it is Allāh ﷻ Who is speaking and the reader is listening.

Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī رحمه الله distinguished three levels of readers. On the lowest level the reader feels that he or she is reading the Qur'ān to Allāh ﷻ. The reader is sitting before Allāh ﷻ Who is looking and listening to what is being read. At the middle level not only is

the reader reading to Allāh ﷻ but is also conversing with Allāh ﷻ. At the highest level the reader sees the Speaker in the Words to the point that he ceases to exist of himself and is divested of anything or any thought other than Allāh ﷻ. al-Ghazālī رحمه الله says that this is the highest level; the level of those who are drawn near {*al-muqarrabūn*}. On the level below are the foremost {*as-sābiqūn*} and at the level below that are the people of the right {*aṣḥāb al-yamīn*}. Any lesser level is the degree of the people of mindlessness and inattention {*al-ghafilūn*}.

Umm-i-Salmah رضي الله عنها, one of the wives of the Prophet ﷺ said, “The Prophet recited Qurʾān in such a way that all the vowel sounds were clear and the pronunciation of each letter was distinct.”

Thus it is desirable that one recite the Qurʾān with cadenced measure even if one may not understand all of the meaning. This way of reading, called *tartīl*, which we have mentioned, has certain rules.

- 1) The letters should be produced correctly to insure that meaning is not changed. This is especially true when there are close resemblances between letters such as the *ha* and *ḥa* or the *ta* and *ṭa* or the *sīn* and the *ṣawd* or the *za* and the *daw*.
- 2) One must learn the orthography of the Qurʾān, especially if one is a non-^cArab, so that what knows where to stop, where to pause and where to go on and which letters to double {*tashdīd*} or extend {*madd*}.
- 3) One should raise the voice to the point that the words uttered by the mouth reach the ears and, in turn, influence the heart.

All of these inner and outer rules still remain within the realm of the exoteric or *ḍhāhir*.

There is yet a whole far more subtle dimension of reading or recital which one must be aware of which is that by the ‘act’ of reading we mean something more than the physical act of enunciating the vowels and consonants which form the words sent down by Allāh. All practicing Muslims do this, at the minimum, in their daily rounds of *ṣalāh* and most active Muslims make a great effort to read some portion of the Qurʾān on a daily basis. But in order to ‘read’ actively, certain relationships and connections must be established between the signs {*ʾāyāt*} in the Book of Wisdom {*kitābi-l-ḥakīm*}, on the horizons, in the earth and in our self {*nafs*} in conjunction with surety {*yaqīn*} and clear {*bayyin*} sight or vision {*baṣīr*} so as to arrive at Reality or the Truth {*ḥaqq*}.

Allāh says, “*These are the signs {ʾāyāt} in the Book of Wisdom,*” {10:1} “*and in the earth are signs for those of sure faith {mūqinūn}. And in your selves {ʾanfusi-kum}. Can you not see {tubṣirūn}?”* {51:20-21} “*We shall show them Our Signs {ʾāyātīnā} in the horizons and within themselves until it is clear {yatabayyina} to them that it is The Truth {al-ḥaqq}.*” {41:53}

That the ‘signs’ exist not only in The Reading {*al-Qurʾān*} or The Book {*al-Kitāb*} but also on the ‘horizons’, in the ‘earth’ and in our ‘self’ points to the transhistorical and multi-dimensional reality of the Revelation which is essential to a transconscious and transmuted spirituality.

Over and over again in the Qurʾān we find Allāh asking us, “Do you not see {ʾaraʾaytum}?” In more than three hundred instances Allāh mentions different ‘signs’, many of which are of a universal nature, that He has given to the People of Knowing {qawmun yaʿlamūn} or People of Understanding {ʾulū-l-albāb}. In only a few instances are these ‘signs’ specific to a particular time or people.

Revelation, it must be known, is not ‘finished’, though it is ‘final’, and, in Reality, is a constant, continuously taking place all about us but ‘readable’ only by those who have knowledge or understanding.

Similarly, and in conjunction, the Qurʾān as Revelation {wahy} is not ‘finished’ though, it, too, is ‘final’ and it, too, is a continuous constant for those that He has blessed with knowledge and understanding. So, “*Recite what has been revealed to you of the Book of your Lord. There is none who can change His Words and you will find no refuge other than with Him,*” {18:27} in the full knowledge that, “*if all of the trees in the earth were pens and the sea, with seven seas added to it {were ink}, still the Words of Allāh could not be exhausted. Lo! Allāh is All-Mighty, Wise.*” {31:27}



Have you not seen how the ships glide upon the sea by the grace of Allāh that He might show you His signs? Truly therein are signs for every steadfast and grateful {heart}.” {31:31} “*Have they not seen the birds above them spreading their wings?*” {67:19} “*Have they not seen how Allāh wafts the clouds, then gathers*

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them and you see the rain come forth from them?" {24:43} *"Have you not seen the very water you drink?"* {56:68} and *"Have you not seen how Allāh makes the night enter into the day?"* {31:29} *"Have they not seen how Allāh increases and decreases their daily portion?"* {30:37} *"Have they not seen how every thing in the heavens and the earth praises Allāh?"* {24:41}

When one comes to understand and know that Revelation is ongoing and constant by 'seeing' that, in Reality {ḥaqīqah}, Revelation is taking place all around us, then it is possible to begin to 'read' the Qur'ān, for as much as the signs in the external world are dynamic and ecstatic, equally are the internal signs of the Book dynamic and ecstatic.


One blessed with knowledge and understanding knows with certainty that all that takes place in the Qur'ān takes place within the vastness of one's own self. In this way the Qur'ān is not simply a Book revealed 1400 years ago but a Book that is 'revealed' in the eternal present of one's own being. The stories of the prophets ﷺ and their preaching to the unbelievers do not only report or record historical events but they are the internal perpetual recapitulation of the 'prophets' contained in each self and their preachments to all those unbelieving parts of one's own self that deny the Truth. The floods, the exodus, the hijra, the battles, the angels descending and ascending, the entirety of the Qur'ān is also an internal event and not only an historico-collective Revelation.

And it is not only the events but the very words and letters which are composites of our being. Consider carefully the meaning of the words that ʿĀʾishah , said concerning the nature of her husband, the Unlettered Messenger of Allāh , who she said, “was the Qurʾān walking.” Reflect upon the deeper meaning of, “*There has come to you a Messenger from your selves {ʾanfusikum}.*” {9:128}

In Sūrah al-ʾIsrāʾ {The Night Journey} there is a portion of ʾāyah 107 which speaks of those given knowledge {ʾūtū-l-ʿilm}: “*When they hear it {al-Qurʾān} they fall down on their faces prostrating.*”

Sahl at-Ṭustarī  writes in his *Tafsir*,

“When the worshipful slave {ʿabd} truly hears {samiʿa} then his inner self {sirr} becomes humble. His heart is illuminated and his limbs and organs {jawāriḥ} become submissive {tadhllul} and they are constrained {inqiyād}.” Allāh has thus created in each being an outer self {dḥahir} and its ‘life’ is praise {ḥamd} and thankfulness {shukr}, and He has created an inner self {sirr} and its ‘life’ is remembrance {dhikr}. Both have their duties {ḥuqūq} and these are acts of obedience {ṭāʿah}. How and where do direct witnessing {mushāhadah}, seeing {muʿāyanah} and contemplation {murāqabah} take place?

at-Ṭustarī says , “Don’t you know that the slave {ʿabd} sees the Truth {yandḥura ila-l-ḥaqq} only due to a subtle substance {laṭīfah} which is connected to his heart {qalb}?”

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It is neither manifest {*mukawwanah*} nor is it created {*makhḷūqah*}. It is neither united {*mawṣūlah*} {to Allāh} nor is it separated {*maqtūʿah*} {from Allāh}. It is an absolute secret {*sirr min sirr ilā sirr*} and an ultimate mystery {*ghayb min ghayb ilā ghayb*}.”

At this point we reach the juncture between the written teachings and the oral teachings, or perhaps it is better to call it: aural science which includes the science of the subtle centers {*latāʿif*}, the science of the letters {*ʿilmu-l-ḥarūf*}⁹ and the science of sound {*ʿilmu-ṣawt*}. This science explicates the events that take place in pre-eternity and makes clear the connection between temporality and realization {*taqwā*}.

It must be understood that within the human body {*jism*} and form {*jasad*} there are subtle centers which are awakened or energised by certain sounds.

When certain of these centers are awakened the subjective result is that the one in whom the center is awakened is transported, or shall we say, ascends {*miʿrāj*} out of the confines of time and space into a pre-eternal place where all the souls that ever will exist are, in the form sub-atomic particles, whirling in a column of light {*ʿamūdu-n-nūr*}.

In this state the souls in the form of luminous particles {*dḥarr*} sense {and here we are on the very thin edge of what words do or do not mean} or “see” Allāh ﷻ inasmuch as it is possible for the contingent created to “see” the Absolute.

⁹ See, “Sacred Inscription as Cosmology: *Glimpses of ʿIlm al-Ḥurūf* by Dr. Saiyad Nizzamuddin Aḥmad, a paper presented on 9 Dhū al-Hijja 1416 {26 April 1995 ce} at the Conference on Inscription as Art in the World of Islam held at Hofstra University, Long Island, New York

“Allāh is the Light of Heaven and Earth.
the likeness of His Light is as a niche wherein is a
lamp,
— the lamp in a glass —
— the glass like a glittering star —
kindled from a blessed tree
— an olive —
neither from the East or the West
whose oil shines though no fire touches it.
— Light upon Light —
Allāh guides to His Light whom He chooses
and
Allāh strikes images for the people
and
Allāh has knowledge of every thing.”
{an-Nūr 24:35}

The Light of Allāh is the primal cosmic origin of all beings manifested in the form of the ethereal pre-eternal prophetic light-being: the *nūru-l-muḥammad*¹⁰ which is the constituent internal subtle essence of all human existence.

Sahl aṭ-Ṭustarī  comments,

“He made it to appear as light from His Light. When that light reached the veil of His Majesty it bowed in prostration before Allāh and Allāh created from this prostration a column of light like crystal glass that is outwardly and inwardly translucent.”

°Ayn al-Qudāt al-Hamdānī  amplifies this, saying,

¹⁰See my *Manifestations of the Shadowless Presence*. A paper given at the Annual Mawlid an-Nabi Conference in Chicago 1416H-1995 ce

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“Allāh created the light of Muḥammad ﷺ from His Light. He formed it and brought it forth at His Own Hand. This light remained before Allāh for a hundred thousand years during which time He beheld it seventy thousand times every day and night. At each glance He formed it into a new light and created from it all existent beings.”

at-Ṭustarī رحمه الله, connects where “that light reached the veil of His Majesty it bowed in prostration before Allāh” to the set of verses in the Chapter of the Star {*Sūratu-n-Najm*} that describe the Night Journey and Ascension of the Prophet, ﷺ.

Indeed he saw Him another time
at the Lote Tree of the Boundary
— near to the Garden of Refuge —

when there covered the Tree what covered it.

His vision neither swerved nor was it overcome.
Indeed he saw one of the greatest signs of His Lord.
{an-Najm 53:13-18}

According to at-Ṭustarī رحمه الله, these verses represent the rapt pre-eternal contemplation and direct witnessing of the Light of Allāh by the subtle ethereal pre-eternal prophetic light-being that pre-figured the events described in verses one through twelve in which the Prophet ﷺ, was granted the vision, whilst in the body, at the very azimuth of his Ascension.

at-Ṭustarī رحمه الله, then goes on to connect these verses to one of the most important verses in the Qur'ān, in which is described another event which takes place in pre-eternity when the collective seed {*dhurriyyah*} of the sum total of humanity is gathered together for the

purpose of entering into the primordial covenant {*mīthāq*}, in which the true knowledge {*ḥaqīqah*} of existence is imprinted on the very essence of all that will be:

And when your Lord took from the Children of Adam
— from their spines their seed —
and made them testify concerning their ‘selves’.


“Am I not your Lord?”

They said, “Truly we see it.”

Lest you say on the Day of Resurrection

“We were heedless.”

{al-ʿAʿrāf 7:172}

For at-Ṭustarī  the use of the word *dhurriyyah* {seed} in the phrase “— *from their spines their seed* —” refers to a luminous sub-atomic particle {*dharr*} which he understands to be cognate with *dhurriyyah*.

Since it is obvious these seeds or sub-atomic particles are also capable of both vision and speech, viz. “Truly we see” {*balā shahidnā*}, it necessarily follows that they are possessed with intellect {*ʿaql*} and the ability to ‘know’ {*maʿrifah*}.

These luminous sub-atomic particles are the very ‘seed’ of our being and are the most subtle essence around which our ‘being’ is formed. Both our origin before time and our purpose and our ultimate destiny in time is to witness our ‘Lord’ in profound worship.

That which we call life is simply our period of trial in which we are tested in the midst of temporal existence on our adherence and commitment to the covenant we *willingly* made in pre-eternity.

The Recital of Qurʾān as a Spiritual Practice

Realisation of this is brought about by remembrance {*dhikr*} in time — and the reading of Qurʾān is the preeminent *dhikr* — of our primordial eternal perfection and our actions based on that remembrance.

Here we have mentioned, and only briefly, some of the understandings that arise from reading just seven ʾāyāh of the Qurʾān. The Qurʾān contains over six thousand ʾāyāh.



﴿لَوْ أَنزَلْنَاهُ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ عَلَى جَبَلٍ لَّرَأَيْتَهُ
خَشَعًا مُّتَصَدِّعًا مِّنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ﴾

lōw ʾanzalnā hādha-l-qurʾāna ʿalā jabalil-laraʾytahu
khashhiʿan mutaṣaddiʿam-min khashyati-llāh

“If We had made this Reading to descend upon
a mountain you would have seen it humbled
— split asunder in the dread of Allāh.”
{al-Ḥashr 59:21}



Shaykh ʿAbdullāh Ibn ʿAlawī al-Haddād ؒ of Tarīm in al-Ḥaḍramawt wrote in the 12th century of the hijrah, “Know that the Qurʾān is an ocean wherefrom the jewels of knowledge and the treasures of understanding are extracted. Any believer who is granted the way to understand it, his Opening {*fath*} becomes permanent, his light complete, his knowledge vast. He never tires of reading it day and night, for he has found therein his goal and his purpose. Shaykh Abū Madyan, ؒ said, “A seeker is not a seeker until he is able to find in the Qurʾān everything that he desires.”

al-Ghazālī رحمہ اللہ wrote that, "In the Qur'ān are to be found fields, gardens, niches, brides, brocades, meadows and inns. All *mīm*'s are the fields of the Qur'ān; all *rā*'s are the gardens; all *hā*'s are its niches; all chapters {*suwar*} starting with the glorification of Allāh ﷻ are its brides; all chapters starting with *Hā Mīm* are its brocades; all the chapters in which laws and stories are set forth are its meadows; and all the other parts are inns. When the reader of Qur'ān enters into the fields of the Qur'ān, plucks different kinds of fruit from its gardens, enters its niches, views the brides, wears the brocades, is relieved of cares, and dwells in its inns, all these absorb him wholly and keep him from things other than these; consequently his mind can not be inattentive nor can his thought be scattered."

The story is told of a man who used to recite the Qur'ān but was unable to find sweetness in it until he recited it as though he heard, in his reading, the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ reading it to his companions, رضی اللہ عنہ. He persisted with his reading until he heard it being recited by the Angel Jibril عليه السلام to the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ. He persisted in his reading until he said, "Now I hear it from the Speaker and I find such intense pleasure and delight that I cannot restrain myself from reading."

It is these states and understandings, and others too numerous to mention, that are the proof of the efficacy of reciting Qur'ān as a spiritual practice.

These are proofs that have been documented by the great friends {*'awliyā'*} of Allāh over the centuries.

The Recital of Qur'ān as a Spiritual Practice

The benefits of reciting the Qur'ān are not confined only to the 'awliyā', for we read in one tradition that, "Surely the house in which Qur'ān is read and Allāh is remembered receives many blessings, angels come to it, shaytāns flee from it. It shines for the inhabitants of the heavens as a radiant star shines for the people of the earth."

If a man recites the Qur'ān at home his wife and children will, 'inshallāh, be inspired to recite it too. Indeed that is the secret of its dissemination from the beginning to the present, for the Prophet ﷺ, did just that and the results are surely clear.

And if there are blessings for reading the Qur'ān at home so too there are great blessings to be gained in gathering together with others in the masjid for the purpose of reciting Qur'ān and making dhikr together.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Never do people gather in one of the houses of Allāh to recite the Qur'ān and read it to one another but that the Peace of Heart {*sakinah*} descends upon them and Divine Mercy {*rahmah*} shrouds them. The angels throng about them and Allāh ﷻ mentions them in the assembly of the Angels ﷻ.¹¹

﴿ فِي بُيُوتٍ أُذِنَ لِلَّهِ أَنْ تَرْفَعَ وَ يُذَكَّرَ فِيهَا أَسْمُهُ ﴾

fī buyūtin 'adhḥina-llāhu 'an turfa'a
wa yudḥakara fihā-s-muhu

"In houses which Allāh allows to be rased up
so that His Name shall be mentioned within them."
{an-Nūr 24:36}

¹¹ Reported by Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه and recorded in Muslim and Abu Dāwud

In closing we offer the words of advice given to the great companion of the Prophet ﷺ Abū Dharr ؓ.

The Prophet replied to his request by saying, “Cultivate the awareness of Allāh {*taqwa*} in your heart because this is at the root of all virtuous deeds.”

Abū Dharr ؓ asked him to add something more and he ؓ said,

“Stick to the recital of Qur’ān because it is Light {*nūr*} in this life and Provision {*dhakīrah*} in the Final Life.”

We hope that these few words may help and inspire others to take up the practice. It is a sure benefit for this world and the next.



والله أعلم

wa-llāhu ‘a‘lim — and Allāh knows best



من الفقير إلى ربه والغنى دائما بفضلته و نعمه

حاج عبد الله نور الدين دركي

Hajj ‘Abdullah Noorudeen Durkee
Green Mountain, Virginia



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